

## Character Profiles

**Lemuel Gulliver** : Lemuel Gulliver is an unremarkable and unimaginative man from middle-class England whose voyages to foreign lands form the central plot. He is morally upright and honest but, as his name suggests, somewhat gullible. As he himself is honest, he naively assumes that everyone else is as honest, and hence believes what he is told. He is an everyman through whose eyes the reader sees and judges the people he encounters.

**The Lilliputians**: The Lilliputians are tiny, six-inch tall people who are filled with self-importance and possess all the petty vices and follies of humankind: greed, hypocrisy, selfishness, and moral corruption. They provide Swift with the opportunity to make the implicit satirical point that in the greater scheme of things, humans, who delude themselves that they are at the pinnacle of creation, are in reality ridiculous and insignificant. In spite of their small size, however, they are capable of doing a great deal of harm, and are treacherous and cruel, as is obvious when they think up gruesome ways to kill Gulliver. Swift used the Lilliputians to satirize English politicians of his time, and several Lilliputians are founded on real people with whom Swift was acquainted. Flimnap, the Lord High Treasurer and most agile of the rope-dancers, is thought to be modeled upon Sir Robert Walpole, leader of the Whig party and the first prime minister of England in the modern sense. The Lilliputian king's agreement to the plan that Gulliver be blinded and starved, presented ironically as an example of his mercy and justice, is a satirical reference to King George I's treatment of captured Jacobite rebels. George had them executed after he had been lauded in Parliament as merciful.

**The Emperor of Lilliput**: The Emperor has the pompous name of Golbasto Momaren Evlame Gurdilo Shefin Mully Uly Gue. Despite his diminutive size, the Emperor's willingness to execute his subjects for trivial reasons and his sudden shifts in loyalty make him a threatening figure embodying political tyranny and the abuse of power.

**Flimnap**: Flimnap is the Lord High Treasurer of Lilliput. He is a wily politician who excels at rope-dancing, a satirical reference to the machinations necessary to achieve and maintain power.

**Reldresal**: Reldresal is Lilliput's Principal Secretary of Private Affairs. Though he claims to be Gulliver's friend, he comes up with a plan to get rid of him by blinding and starving him to death. This plan is ironically presented as an example of mercy. Reldresal embodies the treachery of politicians.

**Skyresh Bolgolam**: Skyresh Bolgolam is the Lord High Admiral of Lilliput. He becomes Gulliver's enemy, seemingly motivated by envy of Gulliver's success at defeating the Blefescudians.

**Slamecksan and Tramecksan**: Slamecksan and Tramecksan are Lilliputian political parties. The first represents the Low Heels, which in turn represent the ruling Whig party of Swift's time. The second represents the High Heels, which in turn represent the Tory party of Swift's time.

**The Brobdingnagians**: The Brobdingnagians are a giant race of people. As well as being physically bigger than Gulliver, they are also morally superior. Like Gulliver's countrymen, they

are subject to all the temptations of humankind, but they choose morality and common sense rather than vice and folly. Though the farmer who finds Gulliver shows greed and lack of compassion in his attempts to profit from him, this is an aberration, not the norm, in this country. The farmer's attitude to Gulliver is offset by the kindness and care of his daughter Glumdalclitch. In addition, as soon as the Queen of Brobdingnag discovers Gulliver's plight, she rescues him from the farmer.

Unlike Gulliver's countrymen, the Brobdingnagians have built morality into their systems of government and the members of their government lead by positive example. The king questions Gulliver closely about England, and concludes (in spite of Gulliver's attempts to paint a falsely positive picture) that his compatriots are "the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth." In the absence of any coherent argument to the contrary apart from Gulliver's indignant patriotism, this statement must be taken as the voice of common sense. Gulliver's account of his time in Brobdingnag is colored by his disgust at their bodily characteristics and functions, which he sees in magnified form because the people are so much bigger than him. However, it is important not to allow Gulliver's fastidiousness to cloud the fact that they are morally superior. The emphasis on physical grossness reinforces Swift's satirical purpose throughout the book in portraying humankind "warts-and-all." The effect is to puncture vanity and self-importance and to counteract the Enlightenment obsession with portraying man as a supremely rational and godlike being.

**The King of Brobdingnag:** The King of Brobdingnag rules his people wisely and compassionately. He questions Gulliver about England and is shocked by the moral corruption prevalent in the government and institutions there.

**The Queen of Brobdingnag:** The Queen of Brobdingnag buys Gulliver from the farmer who is exploiting him and looks after him. She treats him with kindness and consideration, and grows fond of him; he reciprocates her feelings, kissing her little finger as a mark of respect. The farmer: The farmer finds Gulliver in Brobdingnag and keeps him at his house. He makes a profit out of exhibiting Gulliver and is prepared to work him to death in order to make more money.

**Glumdalclitch:** Glumdalclitch is the daughter of the farmer who finds Gulliver in Brobdingnag. She takes care of Gulliver and becomes very fond of him.

**The Laputans:** The Laputans are a people who are so engaged in abstract thought, particularly about mathematics and music, that they pay no attention to practical matters. They are unable to make clothes that fit or houses that stand. They are experts in astronomy, but the only result of their knowledge of the subject is a great fear of cosmic accidents. They are so inattentive to their environment that they are incapable of normal conversation. They are accompanied by servants with "flappers" with which the servants strike their ears and mouth to alert them to listen or speak.

In his portrayal of the Laputans, Swift was satirizing the excesses of abstract and theoretical thought that flourished during the Enlightenment.

**The King of Laputa:** The King of Laputa is preoccupied with mathematics and music. He is only interested in abstract thought, at the expense of practical matters.

**The Academy Projectors (Professors)** : The Academy Projectors are Balnibarbian reformers who plan reforms based on abstract theories, without considering their effects in the real world. Swift used as his model for these professors the scientists of the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge (which still exists as of 2006 under the shortened name, the Royal Society), and many of the experiments he mentions in his satire were either carried out or proposed by these scientists.

**Lord Munodi:** Lord Munodi is the Governor of the town of Lagado, on Balnibarbi. He is a traditionalist who is opposed to the reformers of the Academy. Rejecting their unreliable theories, he sticks to tried and tested old ways of running his estate. In consequence, he has a fine, strong house and his estate and tenants are flourishing, while other estate owners who have embraced the Academicians' absurd notions have ruined their houses, lands, and tenants.

**The Struldbruggs:** The Struldbruggs are an immortal race of humans who age without dying. Sunk in despair and sickness, they provide Gulliver with a living lesson in the undesirability of immortality.

**The Houyhnhnms:** The Houyhnhnms are a superior race of rational horses, who run their society according to reason and virtue. The good of the individual is subjugated to the good of the race as a whole, and indeed, the Houyhnhnms do not have strong individual characteristics or even individual names. The Houyhnhnms are the masters of the Yahoos, who act as their servants. Gulliver is morally inferior to the Houyhnhnms, but strives to become one of them, even taking on horse-like characteristics. He is unsuccessful and is expelled from the Houyhnhnms' country because he seems to them to be a superior sort of Yahoo. The satirical purpose of the Houyhnhnms is to represent the most rational aspects of humankind.

**Gulliver's Houyhnhnm master:** Gulliver's master in the country of the Houyhnhnms is not given a name. He is wise, compassionate, and just, and welcomes Gulliver into his home. Ultimately, however, he is forced to ask Gulliver to leave his country on the grounds that Gulliver is not a Houyhnhnm, but a sort of superior Yahoo.

**The Yahoos:** The Yahoos are the bestial and repugnant race of human-like creatures that inhabit the land of the Houyhnhnms. They are held in subjection by the Houyhnhnms and act as their servants, being used for carriage and draught. They are without moral sense and their actions are dictated by greed, destructiveness, and base appetites. The Houyhnhnms believe that Gulliver is a sort of Yahoo, and finally expel him from their kingdom because of this. Gulliver goes to extreme lengths to dissociate himself from the Yahoos and pretend that he is a Houyhnhnm, although physically, he resembles the Yahoos more. The satirical purpose of the Yahoos is to represent all that is selfish, bestial, and violent in human nature, as their behavior mirrors the worst aspects of human behavior.

**Mary Burton Gulliver:** Mary Burton Gulliver is Gulliver's wife. He barely mentions her, and when he does, it is in connection with the money that she brings to the marriage. When he returns from the country of the Houyhnhnms to live with her and his children, he finds himself repulsed by her, as he is by all mankind, as he thinks of them as Yahoos.

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**Don Pedro de Mendez:** Don Pedro is the captain of the ship that picks up Gulliver from a remote island after his departure from the country of the Houyhnhnms. He is kind, courteous, and generous, and even offers Gulliver his own best suit of clothes. He represents the best in mankind, and unlike the Houyhnhnms, his virtue is attainable by any person. Gulliver, however, is blind to Don Pedro's goodness, seeing him only as one of the Yahoos.